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AUTHORITY: 31 U.S.C. 3701-3719; Pub. L. 97-365, 96 Stat. 1754.

SOURCE: 53 FR 24624, June 29, 1988, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1015.1 Purpose.

This part establishes procedures for the Department of Energy (DOE) to collect, compromise, or terminate collection action on claims of the United States for money or property arising from activities under DOE jurisdiction. It specifies the agency procedures and the rights of the debtor applicable to claims for the payment of debts owed to the United States. It incorporates, as appropriate, the Federal Claims Collection Standards (4 CFR parts 101-105). It sets forth procedures by which DOE:

- (a) Will collect claims owed to the United States;
- (b) Will determine and collect interest and other charges on those claims;
- (c) Will compromise claims; and
- (d) Will refer unpaid claims for litigation.

[53 FR 24624, June 29, 1988; 53 FR 27798, July 22, 1988]

§ 1015.2 Applicability.

(a) This part applies to all claims due the United States under the Federal Claims Collection Act, as amended by the Debt Collection Act (31 U.S.C. 3701-3719), arising from activities under the jurisdiction of DOE unless such claims are otherwise subject to applicable laws or regulations. For purposes of this part, claims include, but are not limited to, amounts due the United States from fees, loans, loan guarantees, overpayments, fines, civil penalties, damages, interest, sale of products and services, and other sources. This part provides the procedures for collection of claims by administrative offset under 31 U.S.C. 3716. DOE 2200.2, *Collection From Employees for Indebtedness to the United States*, provides the

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procedures for collection of claims by Federal salary offset under 5 U.S.C. 5514. The failure of DOE to include in this part any provision of the Federal Claims Collection Standards does not prevent DOE from applying the provision. The failure of DOE to comply with any provision of this part or of the Federal Claims Collection Standards shall not be available as a defense to any debtor in terms of affecting the merits of the underlying indebtedness.

(b) All claims due from Federal employees will be collected in accordance with DOE 2200.2, *Collection from Employees for Indebtedness to the United States*, or successor internal directives. DOE 2200.2 provides for hearings as required under 5 U.S.C. 5514 and 4 CFR part 102.

(c) Claims arising from the audit of transportation accounts pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 3726 shall be determined, collected, compromised, terminated, or settled in accordance with regulations published under the authority of 31 U.S.C. 3726 (see 41 CFR parts 101-141, administered by the Director, Office of Transportation Audits, General Services Administration) and are otherwise excepted from these regulations.

(d) (1) Claims arising out of acquisition contracts, subcontracts, and purchase orders which are subject to the Federal Acquisition Regulation Systems, including the Federal Acquisition Regulation, 48 CFR subpart 32.6, and the Department of Energy Acquisition Regulations, 48 CFR subpart 932.6, shall be determined or settled in accordance with those regulations.

(2) Claims arising out of financial assistance instruments (e.g., grants, subgrants, contracts under grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts under cooperative agreements) and loans and loan guarantees shall be determined or settled in accordance with internal DOE directives. Relevant provisions currently are set forth primarily at 10 CFR 600.26 and 10 CFR 600.112(f).

[53 FR 24624, June 29, 1988; 53 FR 27798, July 22, 1988]

§ 1015.3 Demand for payment.

(a) A total of three progressively stronger written demands at not more than approximately 30-day intervals will normally be made unless a response or other information indicates

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that a further demand would be futile or unnecessary. When necessary to protect the Government's interest, written demand may be preceded by other appropriate actions under the Federal Claims Collection Standards, including immediate offset, as provided in paragraph (d)(2) of this section, and/or referral for litigation.

(b) The initial written demand for payment should inform the debtor of the following:

- (1) The basis for the claim;
- (2) The amount of the claim;
- (3) Any right to a review of the claim within DOE;
- (4) The date by which DOE expects full payment and after which the account is considered delinquent (this is the due date and is normally not more than 30 days from the date the written initial demand was either mailed, hand-delivered, or otherwise transmitted);
- (5) The provision for interest, penalties, and administrative charges in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3717, if payment is not received by the due date (see § 1015.4 for details regarding interest, administrative charges, and penalty charges); and
- (6) The DOE's intent to utilize any applicable collection actions made available by the Debt Collection Act of 1982 and the Federal Claims Collection Standards. When determined necessary to protect the Government's interest, DOE may initiate any of the actions available under the referenced Act and/or Standards. These actions may include, but are not limited to, immediate referral for litigation, administrative offset (as provided in paragraph (d)(2) of this section), reports to credit bureaus, and referrals to collection agencies.

(c) If the debt is not paid by the date specified in the initial written demand, two progressively stronger demands shall be sent to the debtor unless a response or other information indicates that additional written demands would either be futile or unnecessary. These written demands will be timed so as to provide an adequate period of time within which the debtor could be expected to respond. While shorter periods of time are acceptable, intervals of approximately 30 days should be suffi-

cient. Depending on the circumstances of the particular case, the demand letters may state:

- (1) The amount of any late payment charge (interest, penalties, and administrative charges) added to the debt;
- (2) That the delinquent debt may be reported to a credit reporting agency;
- (3) That the debt may be referred to a private collection agency for collection;
- (4) That the debt may be collected through administrative offset in accordance with the Federal Claims Collection Standards (4 CFR part 102); and
- (5) That the debt may be referred for litigation.

(d)(1) Before collecting a debt by administrative offset, the debtor shall be advised of the following information either in the initial written demand and/or subsequent written demands, or by separate notice of DOE's intent to collect the debt by administrative offset:

- (i) Nature and amount of debt;
- (ii) Payment due date;
- (iii) The intent of DOE to collect by administrative offset (in accordance with the Federal Claims Collection Standards (4 CFR part 102)), including requesting other Federal agencies to help in the offset whenever possible, if the debtor has not made voluntary payment, has not requested a hearing or review of the claim within DOE as set out in paragraph (d)(1)(v) of this section, or has not made arrangements for payment as set out in paragraph (d)(1)(vi) of this section by the payment due date;
- (iv) The right of the debtor to inspect and copy the DOE records related to the claim. Any costs associated therewith shall be borne by the debtor. The debtor shall give reasonable notice in advance to DOE of the date upon which it intends to inspect and copy the records involved;
- (v) The right of the debtor to a hearing or review of the claim. DOE shall provide the debtor with a reasonable opportunity for an oral hearing when:
 - (A) An applicable statute authorizes or requires DOE to consider waiver of the indebtedness involved, the debtor requests waiver of the indebtedness, and the waiver determination turns on an issue of credibility or veracity; or
 - (B) the debtor requests reconsideration of

the debt and DOE determines that the question of indebtedness cannot be resolved by review of the documentary evidence, for example, when the validity of the debt turns on an issue of credibility or veracity. Unless otherwise required by law, an oral hearing under this section is not required to be a formal evidentiary-type hearing, although DOE will document all significant matters discussed at the hearing. This section does not require an oral hearing with respect to debt collection systems in which determinations of indebtedness or waiver rarely involve issues of credibility or veracity and DOE has determined that review of the written record is ordinarily an adequate means to correct prior mistakes. In administering such a system, DOE is not required to sift through all of the requests received in order to accord oral hearings in those few cases which may involve issues of credibility or veracity. In those cases where an oral hearing is not required by this section, DOE will accord the debtor a “paper” hearing, that is, DOE will make its determination on the request for waiver or reconsideration based upon a review of the written record. If the claim is disputed in full or in part, the debtor’s written response to the demand must include a request for review of the claim within DOE. If the debtor disputes the claim, the debtor shall explain why the debt is incorrect. The explanation should be supported by affidavits, canceled checks, or other relevant information. The written response must reach DOE by the payment due date. A written response received after the payment due date may be accepted if the debtor can show that the delay was due to circumstances beyond the debtor’s control or failure to receive notice of the time limit. The debtor’s written response shall state the basis for the dispute. If only part of the claim is disputed, the undisputed portion should be paid by the date stated in the initial demand. DOE shall notify the debtor, within 30 days whenever feasible, whether DOE’s determination of the debt has been sustained, amended, or canceled. If DOE either sustains or amends its determination, it shall notify the debtor of its intent to collect by administrative

offset unless payment is received within 15 days of the mailing of the notification of its decision; and

(vi) The right of the debtor to offer to make a written agreement to repay the amount of the claim. The acceptance of such an agreement is discretionary with DOE. If the debtor requests a repayment arrangement because a payment of the amount due would create a financial hardship, DOE will assess the debtor’s financial condition based on financial statements submitted by the debtor. Dependent upon the evaluation of the financial condition of the debtor, DOE and the debtor may agree to a written installment repayment schedule. The debtor should execute a confess-judgment note which specifies all of the terms of the arrangement. The size and frequency of the installment payments should bear a reasonable relation to the size of the debt and the debtor’s ability to pay. Interest, administrative charges, and penalty charges shall be provided for in the note. The debtor shall be provided with a written explanation of the consequences of signing a confess-judgment note. The debtor shall sign a statement acknowledging receipt of the written explanation which shall provide that the statement was read and understood before execution of the note and that the note is being signed knowingly and voluntarily. Some form of objective evidence of these facts will be maintained in DOE’s file on the debtor.

(2) In cases in which the procedural requirements specified in this paragraph have previously been provided to the debtor in connection with the same debt under some other statutory or regulatory authority, such as pursuant to a notice of audit disallowance, DOE is not required to duplicate those requirements before taking administrative offset. Furthermore, DOE may effect administrative offset against a payment to be made to a debtor prior to completion of the required procedures if failure to take the offset would substantially prejudice the Government’s ability to collect the debt and the time before the payment is to be made does not reasonably permit the completion of those procedures. Such prior offset will be promptly followed

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by completion of those procedures. Amounts recovered by administrative offset found not to be owed to DOE shall be promptly refunded.

(e) At any time during the collection cycle, DOE may take any of the actions authorized under this section or under the Federal Claims Collection Standards. These actions include, but are not limited to, reports to credit bureaus, referrals to collection agencies, termination of contract, debarment, and administrative offset, as authorized in 31 U.S.C. 3701-3719.

[53 FR 24624, June 29, 1988; 53 FR 27798, July 22, 1988]

§ 1015.4 Interest, administrative charges, and penalty charges.

(a) DOE shall assess interest on unpaid claims at the rate of the current value of funds to the Treasury as prescribed by the Secretary of the Treasury on the date the computation of interest begins unless a higher rate of interest is necessary to protect the interests of the Government. DOE shall assess administrative charges to cover the costs of processing and handling overdue claims. Administrative charges will be assessed concurrent with the interest assessment and will be based on actual costs incurred or an average of additional costs incurred in processing and handling claims in similar stages of delinquency. DOE shall assess penalty charges of six percent a year on any part of a debt more than 90 days past due. Such assessment will be retroactive to the first day the debt became delinquent. The imposition of interest, administrative charges, and penalty charges is made in accordance with 31 U.S.C. 3717.

(b) Interest will be computed from the date the initial demand is mailed, hand-delivered, or otherwise transmitted to the debtor. If the claim or any portion thereof is paid within 30 days after the date on which interest began to accrue, the associated interest shall be waived. This period for waiver of interest may be extended in individual cases if there is good cause to do so and it is in the public interest. Interest will only be computed on the principal of the claim and the interest rate will remain fixed for the duration of the indebtedness, except where a

debtor has defaulted on a repayment agreement and seeks to enter into a new agreement. A new rate which reflects at a minimum the current value of funds to the Treasury at the time the new agreement is executed may be set, if applicable, and interest on interest and related charges may be charged where the debtor has defaulted on a previous repayment agreement. Charges which accrued but were not collected under the defaulted agreement shall be added to the principal to be paid under the new repayment schedule.

(c) DOE may waive interest, administrative charges, or penalty charges if it finds that one or more of the following conditions exist:

(1) The debtor is unable to pay any significant sum toward the claim within a reasonable period of time;

(2) Collection of interest, administrative charges, or penalty charges will jeopardize collection of the principal of the claim; or

(3) It is otherwise in the best interests of the United States, including the situation in which an offset or installment payment agreement is in effect.

(d) *Exemptions.* (1) The provisions of 31 U.S.C. 3717 do not apply:

(i) To debts owed by any State or local government;

(ii) To debts arising under contracts which were executed prior to, and were in effect on (i.e., were not completed as of) October 25, 1982;

(iii) To debts where an applicable statute, regulation required by statute, loan agreement, or contract either prohibits such charges or explicitly fixes the charges that apply to the debts involved; or

(iv) Debts arising under the Social Security Act, the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or the tariff laws of the United States.

(2) DOE may, however, assess interest and related charges on debts which are not subject to 31 U.S.C. 3717 to the extent authorized under the common law or other applicable statutory authority.

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